DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 201 175 FL 012 116

TITLE Demystifying the Chinese Language.
INSTITUTION Stanford Univ., Calif. Center for Research in International Studies.
SPONS AGENCY National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 77p.; Developed by the Bay Area China Education Project.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Chinese; Diachronic Linguistics; Elementary Education; *Ideography; Public Policy; *Second Language Instruction; Verbal Communication; Writing Instruction; Written Language
IDENTIFIERS China

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this unit is to demonstrate to students that the Chinese writing system, though different from the English alphabet system, is an equally plausible communication system. The exploration of Chinese writing is begun with an exercise designed to convey the importance of a written communication system, as well as the problems and frustrations involved in developing such a system. Students then participate in a set of three discovery exercises, offering them an opportunity to decipher Chinese characters, to trace the development of several characters from ancient to modern forms, and to become acquainted with particular features of the Chinese writing system. An investigation follows into the communication difficulties created by the presence of dialects. The final exercise encourages students to evaluate the present goals of "language reform" in the People's Republic of China. The content and design of the unit are aimed at upper elementary-middle school students, but the unit can easily be adapted for other levels. Students are encouraged to work in small groups. Extensive instructions to the teacher and a bibliography make it unnecessary for the teacher to know Chinese. (JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED201175

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Demystifying the Chinese Language

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Bay Area China Education Project
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FL 012116

BAYCEP $1

DEMYSTIFYING THE CHINESE LANGUAGE

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Many people experience a sense of strangeness when they first encounter the Chinese written language. This is largely due to the vast differences between the English alphabetic writing system and the Chinese writing system which has developed from pictorial writing. The main purpose of this unit is to demonstrate to students that the Chinese writing system, though different from the English alphabet system with which they are most familiar, is an equally plausible communication system.

The mystique surrounding the Chinese written language is often due to English speakers' lack of information about and lack of exposure to written Chinese. It is assumed that familiarizing students with the Chinese writing system will reduce the strangeness associated with this system. Thus, this unit proposes to engage students in the process of "demystifying the Chinese language."

DEMYSTIFYING THE CHINESE LANGUAGE is specifically designed to actively engage students in exercises involving the Chinese written language. While distinguishing features of the spoken language (e.g., the tonal nature of Chinese) are explained in a supplementary section on Chinese language prepared for the teacher's use, the spoken language itself is not covered in any depth by materials in the unit.

Content

DEMYSTIFYING THE CHINESE LANGUAGE is a flexible unit. It is appropriate for social studies courses in which China is studied; for multicultural studies courses; for specialized coursework on communications, sociology, linguistics, etc.; or in conjunction with Language Arts curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to use the unit in its entirety, but sections or specific exercises may be presented successfully in isolation. A description of the unit follows.

Origins of Communication: Students will begin their inquiry with an exercise designed to convey the importance of a written communication system, as well as the problems and frustrations involved in developing such a system. Students will explore the origins of written communication in general, and then view the differences that exist between various forms of writing systems. This preliminary exercise will portray writing systems as valuable tools which have been developed by societies over time in a variety of ways.

Discovery Exercises: Immediately following the exercise on the origins of communication, students will participate in a set of three discovery exercises. These exercises will offer students an opportunity to decipher Chinese characters (both ancient and modern) in isolation and in context, and to trace the development of several characters from

ancient to modern forms. Students will also become acquainted with particular features of the Chinese writing system, thus developing their appreciation of written Chinese as a logical and appropriate form of written communication.

Dialect Exercise: In yet another exercise, students will investigate the communication difficulties created by the presence of dialects--distinct, local forms of language. Once students have experienced the barriers inhibiting oral communication among speakers of different Chinese dialects, they will be prepared to explore methodologies for alleviating the obstacle imposed by dialect variation in present day China.

Language Reform: The final exercise encourages students to evaluate the present goals of "language reform" in the People's Republic of China, in light of the complex language situation that exists, and in light of changing social values. The three-fold goals which will be surveyed include: efforts to solve the difficulties in communication arising from the presence of dialects and minority languages; efforts to eradicate illiteracy; and efforts to keep pace with the demands of modern technology on language. Students will view the relationship between the specific language reform movement and broader changes in the society.

Skills

DEMYSTIFYING THE CHINESE LANGUAGE is appropriate for students at many skill levels. The content and design are aimed at upper elementary-middle school students (5th-8th grade), but the unit can easily be adapted for lower elementary grades, or supplemented for high school, community college, or adult education. (Note the secondary supplement: "The Water Buffalo and the Tiger" provided in Discovery Project #3.)

Throughout the unit students are asked to work together in small groups to accomplish set tasks. This group effort will help students develop skills in working cooperatively with others, and will foster the notion of mutual responsibility. The DISCOVERY EXERCISES are inquiry-based, and require students to think critically and logically. Throughout the unit students are encouraged to exercise their creativity, thus making the exercises both educational and entertaining.

Organization

No knowledge of Chinese is required by either the students or the teacher. For each exercise the necessary background information is supplied. Complete instructions for presenting the exercises are included. Each exercise contains information on preparation, a list of activities suggesting the in-class procedure, notes (practical tips on logistics, etc.), and suggested discussion topics for follow-up purposes. All student handouts needed for each particular exercise are included at the end of that exercise, and are labeled for easy identification. A supplementary section on Chinese Language is provided. (It is strongly recommended that teachers read this supplement and familiarize themselves as much as possible with the elements of the Chinese language presented in it before beginning the unit with their class.) Finally, a bibliography of suggested reading materials is appended.

WE HOPE YOU ENJOY DEMYSTIFYING THE CHINESE LANGUAGE!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION i

ORIGINS OF COMMUNICATION 1

DISCOVERY PROJECT #1 7

FLASHCARDS 17

STUDENT HANDOUTS 26, 27

ANSWER KEY 28

DISCOVERY PROJECT #2 29

STUDENT HANDOUTS 33, 35

DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CHARACTERS (CHART) 34

DISCOVERY PROJECT #3 36

ELEMENTARY STORY 40

GLOSSARY 42

SECONDARY STORY 43

GLOSSARY 48

DIALECT EXERCISE 49

STUDENT HANDOUT 52

LANGUAGE REFORM 53

REPRINT OF CHARACTERS 63

SUPPLEMENT: THE CHINESE LANGUAGE 64

GLOSSARY OF LINGUISTIC TERMS 66

GUIDE TO PINYIN ROMANIZATION SYSTEM 67

BIBLIOGRAPHY 68

REVISED EDITION

Copyright © 1980 by the Board of Trustees,
LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY

This unit was developed by the Bay Area China Education Project (BAYCEP).
BAYCEP was funded in part by The National Endowment for the Humanities.

THE ORIGINS OF COMMUNICATION

Background

How do we develop communication systems? What forms can we use to communicate an idea to someone else? (Examples: body language, speech, writing) These questions are among those to be explored by students in the preliminary exercise presented below. In this exercise students will experience some of the difficulties and frustrations involved in formulating a suitable communication system. Working in small groups, students will attempt to create a written symbol for a concrete object and an abstract idea, respectively. Through this experience, students will become acquainted with the logic behind writing systems such as the Chinese pictographic/ideographic system. Afterwards, students will have the opportunity to explore the appropriateness of the symbols constructed by the various groups, and to investigate the criteria involved in choosing a logical system of written symbols to communicate with others.

Objectives

- to let students experience the difficulties involved in creating an effective form of written communication
- to give students an opportunity to exercise their creativity by constructing written symbols to communicate concrete objects and abstract concepts
- to acquaint students with the concept of pictographic and ideographic writing
- to encourage students to view pictographic/ideographic writing, such as the Chinese written language system, as a viable and logical alternative for communication
- to encourage students to explore the criteria involved in choosing and developing a system of written communication
- to give students practice working cooperatively in small groups

Preparation

Materials: chalkboard, chalk for each group, index cards

Before class: On one set of index cards, record a concrete object (one per card) selected from LIST #1 below. (Or, you may record any other concrete object of your choice.) On another set of index cards, record an abstract idea from LIST #2 below (or one of your own choice). You should prepare one card with a concrete object and one card with an abstract idea for each group of 4-6 students.

LIST #1

horse	bicycle	train	flower	cloud	desk
car	table	lion	cup	duck	apple
bus	book	rabbit	pencil	chair	grapes
star	sun	boat	tree	pig	mountain
house	woman	bird	clock	shoe	man

LIST #2

easier concepts		more difficult concepts	
smart	life	intelligence	purple
happy	green	government	youth
free	young	hope	honesty
mad	bright	careful	tragedy
hurt	sick	loyalty	pain
love	brave	democracy	creative
joy	hate	jealousy	remember

Activities

(1) Ask the class to imagine that they neither speak nor write any known language. Then, ask them to try to communicate the concept "river" in some way, without using words. (Body language, sound effects, and written symbols are all possible alternatives.) Have several volunteers demonstrate their ideas to the rest of the class.

(2) Next, divide students into small groups (4-6 students in each). Give each group one of the index cards prepared from LIST #1 (concrete object). Ask each group to create a written symbol for their assigned card. They must agree on the symbol chosen.

As each group arrives at a decision for their symbol, have a representative from the group display the chosen symbol on the chalkboard, for the entire class to view. When all groups have recorded their respective symbols, have the class as a whole review each symbol and attempt to guess its meaning. Most likely the students will select a pictorial symbol to express their concrete object. Ask the students if anyone knows the name for a written symbol that is pictorial in nature. (PICTOGRAPH) Determine whether the students thought this task was easy or difficult. Did students have difficulty constructing a symbol for their assigned object, or difficulty in determining the meaning of the symbols constructed by other groups?

(3) Have students return to their small groups. At this time, distribute the index cards with words recorded from LIST #3 (abstract idea), one per group. Have each group repeat the process of creating a symbol to communicate the assigned idea. Again, the group must agree on the symbol chosen. As each group arrives at a symbol, have a representative display the chosen symbol on the chalkboard. When all groups have recorded their symbols, have the class re-assemble to review the new set of symbols and to guess their meanings.

No doubt the students will become aware of the inadequacy of simple pictographs to express other than concrete objects. After the class attempts to determine the concept represented by each symbol created, conduct another "difficulty poll." How hard was this task? What difficulties were involved in creating a symbol for the assigned words, and what problems were encountered in determining the meanings of the symbols constructed by other groups? Ask the class what symbols that represent ideas are called (IDEOGRAPH).

(4) The class as a whole should now attempt to develop criteria for selecting symbols which best convey a given object or idea. Such characteristics as simplicity and ease of replication of the symbol might be considered. (The student who draws a complex and skillful picture of a horse might not be thinking about his/her less artistic classmates.) The selection of these criteria will provide a framework for students' understanding of the development of the Chinese language as it is explored further in this unit.

Notes

(A) It is helpful to record the concrete objects (from LIST #1) on index cards of one color and the abstract ideas (from LIST #2) on cards of a different color. This will aid in keeping the two sets separate. You may wish to advise students not to write on the cards assigned to their group, so that all cards may be used again in the future.

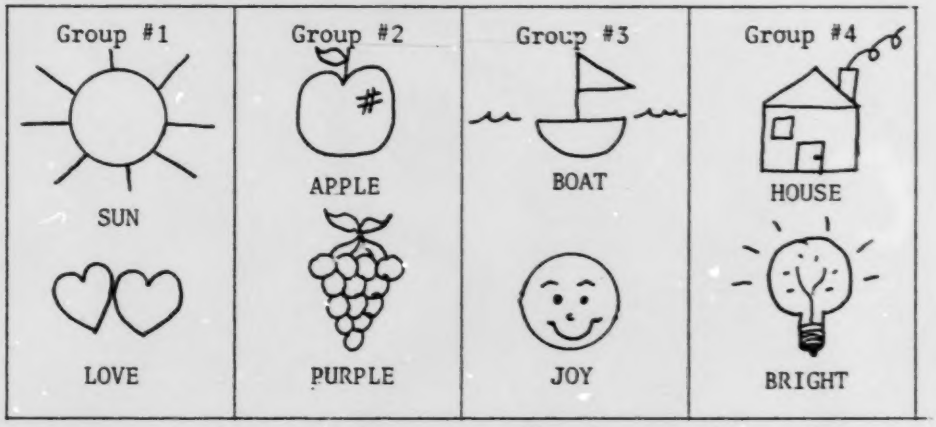
(B) Depending on your class, it may be desirable to number students off at the beginning of the period(s) in which there is to be small-group work. Determining group assignments in this way will help to minimize confusion and maximize cooperation; all students will be automatically included in a group, and strong alliances which may interfere with the success of the exercise will be randomly distributed among the various groups.

(C) After Activity #1, you may wish to have students review the available alternatives for communicating a given object or concept. Using the concept "sun," have students list the various ways for communicating this object. Their list may include the following:

a. the spoken word (in any language)
b. the written word (in any language)
c. a picture of the sun
d. body language representing the sun
e. pointing to the sun itself
f. finger-spelling
g. braille
h. morse-code, etc. etc.

(D) To insure cooperation at the chalkboard, divide the available chalkboard space into sections for each group. Have the representatives drawing the symbols for concrete objects record the symbol in the top half of their group's column of space. Have the student representatives recording their group's abstract symbol place this symbol in the lower half of their allotted space. This will also aid in reviewing the symbols created by the class: both symbols (concrete object and abstract idea) constructed by each group will be preserved to assist students in their later discussion of pictographs, ideographs, and criteria for choosing a writing system.

(E) When students correctly identify the meaning of the symbols created by their classmates, record the answer under the symbol on the chalkboard. (Record the answers for both the concrete-object symbols and the abstract-idea symbols produced in Activities #2 and #3, respectively.) Students will then be able to use the chalkboard as a reference for the later discussion. At the completion of Activity #3, the chalkboard should resemble the following sample:



(F) Often students are disappointed when classmates correctly identify the written symbol constructed by their group. Young students must be reminded that communicating the given object or idea via the written symbol produced by their group is indeed the purpose of the exercise! Some students will avoid producing the most obvious symbol for their assigned object or concept, and produce instead a less rational and more complex symbol in an effort to obscure the "answer" from their classmates. (E.G., students assigned the object "house" will draw an igloo or cave instead of a conventional drawing of a modern style house.) If you observe this happening while students are working in their groups to construct a symbol, it is extremely important to gear the students back to the task of communicating with other groups.

Discussion Topics

#1: An elaborated discussion of the various forms of communication people use--such as oral-aural, visual, symbolic, alphabetic, etc.--would be appropriate at the conclusion of this exercise. Through a discussion of the alternative forms of communication used throughout the world, students become sensitive to the fact that various forms of communication have both basic commonalities and particular characteristics which make them unique. Suggestions for communication systems which may be explored by students include:

body language (kinesics)
semaphores*
American Sign Language for the Deaf
Braille
Morse Code
pig Latin
whistling language (Mazteco Indians)
football referee's gestures
Esperanto/Interlingua
smoke signals
drum language

During the discussion, demonstrate to students that some of the systems mentioned above are based on the English alphabet (Morse Code and Braille, for example), while others are based on a direct correspondence of idea to symbol (sign language--excluding finger-spelling, referee's gestures, hieroglyphs, pictographs, etc.).

#2: In reference to their investigation of pictographs, students may wish to explore comparative pictographs and hieroglyphs of various ancient cultures. You may wish to use the chart on the following page, to compare samples of the writing systems of the SUMERIANS, EGYPTIANS, HITTITES, and CHINESE. Instruct students to look for similarities and differences among the four styles. Suggested questions:

1. Which symbols are the most difficult to recognize? Which are the easiest to recognize?
2. Which symbols would be the most difficult to reproduce? Why?
3. Among the four cultures, which symbols have the greatest similarity?
   Which symbols are very different among the four cultures?

#3: Since the Chinese system of pictographs and ideographs** is one system of writing unfamiliar to most students, it may be interesting to further explore different writing systems with students, such as ancient pictographic or hieroglyphic systems (Topic #2); Amerindian picture-writing; syllabary systems (e.g., Japanese, Sanskrit); & other alphabets (Phoenician, Greek, Hebrew, etc.). ***

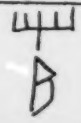
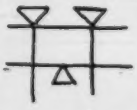
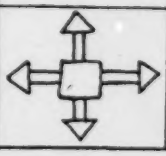
Before discussing these alternative writing systems, you may wish to ask students for a definition of writing. Record initial student responses. After the various writing systems have been discussed, again ask students how they would define writing. Compare the latter set of responses with students' original responses.

---

* For a definition of linguistic terms, see GLOSSARY.

** Some linguists argue that Chinese is a "logographic" writing system, meaning that the characters do not directly represent the symbol, but represent the spoken word. For the purposes of this unit, we will concentrate on the pictographic and ideographic nature of ancient Chinese writing.

*** For informational sources on the various writing systems, see RECOMMENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY.

SUMERIAN	EGYPTIAN	HITTITE	CHINESE	MEANING
				MAN
				KING
				OX
				SKY
				STAR
				SUN
				WATER
				HOUSE
				ROAD
				CITY

Adapted from A Study of Writing by I.J. Gelb, Figure 54, page 98 (1965 Edition).

DISCOVERY PROJECT #1

Background

The following exercise introduces students to ancient forms of Chinese characters adapted from characters appearing on Shang Dynasty (c. 1500-1100 BC) oracle bones. Oracle bones were made from either animal bones or tortoise shells and were carved for the purpose of divination. The characters appearing on these bones constitute the earliest authenticated examples of the Chinese written language. The characters utilized in this exercise are later forms, dating from around the third century BC. Both the characters found on the oracle bones and the character forms used in this exercise more closely resemble pictures than do modern Chinese characters. (Students will further investigate the development of Chinese characters from early pictorial forms to their present modern forms in Discovery Project #2.)

Through THE ORIGINS OF COMMUNICATION exercise, students attempted to create written symbols to convey a concrete object and an abstract idea, respectively. Now, through examples of ancient Chinese written symbols, students will investigate some of the characteristics and techniques incorporated by the Chinese in their effort to express more complex objects and ideas. Students will make comparisons between their own experiences and the experiences of the ancient Chinese in formulating a written language.

To prepare students for the discovery work presented in this exercise, the concepts of PICTOGRAPH and IDEOGRAPH encountered earlier will be reviewed. More authentic examples of PICTOGRAPHS and IDEOGRAPHS are provided on flashcards. In addition, the teacher will introduce students to the concept of COMPOUND IDEOGRAPHS--ideographs with more than one component. Again, examples from Chinese are provided on flashcards. In this way, students will be sufficiently primed for their task, and will gain some knowledge of the "wit and wisdom" behind Chinese character writing.

For the discovery task itself, students will again be divided into small groups. Each group will be given a list of ancient Chinese characters (LIST #1) with English meanings provided. Using this list as a tool, students will be asked to work in their groups in an effort to decipher the meanings of another list of characters (LIST #2) presented to them. This second, "untranslated" list will contain several COMPOUND IDEOGRAPHS--characters with more than one component, the meanings of which are derived from the association between the various components. Students will be instructed to use their knowledge of individual components provided on LIST #1, as well as their imaginations and ingenuity, to analyze the new characters and attempt to determine the meaning for each character on LIST #2.

An "Answer Key" is provided for the teacher's use. However, whether or not students are able to arrive at the given solutions is not important. The value of the exercise lies in students' abilities to relate this exercise to their own experiences in developing a communication system. Upon viewing the particular features and techniques of ancient Chinese writing presented in this exercise, (and having already discussed the standards they themselves used in forming written symbols),

students should be adequately prepared to construct hypotheses regarding the criteria for developing a writing system adopted by the people of ancient China. Following this identification process, students will discuss and compare the standards and techniques for developing written symbols employed by the Chinese and by the class, in a continued effort to students' knowledge, awareness, and appreciation of the available alternatives for written communication.

This exercise contains other valuable dimensions: In the process of decoding the list of "new characters," students are required to think analytically and encouraged to use their imaginations. Students must view the meanings of each component appearing in the compound ideograph, and then clearly and logically determine the association between the individual components in an effort to determine the meaning of the entire character. Also, students are once again given the opportunity to work cooperatively in small groups. In this exercise group roles may be assigned--leader, recorder, etc. Thus students will pretend that they indeed are part of an "archaeological team" working together to accomplish their task of decoding!

In summary, it is hoped that this particular discovery project will provide students with some basic knowledge of written Chinese upon which they may build their understanding of and appreciation for the logic and beauty of the Chinese writing system. This exercise is intended to portray the Chinese written language as one culture's appropriate response to the human need and desire for a structured system of written communication.

Objectives

- to expose students to authentic ancient Chinese characters
- to provide information on certain features of the Chinese writing system in an effort to illustrate the logic behind written Chinese and to broaden students' knowledge of Chinese characters
- to encourage students to further explore the characteristics and techniques incorporated in ancient Chinese writing
- to have students construct hypotheses regarding the criteria used by the ancient Chinese in developing their writing system, and to have students relate the development of this system to their own experiences in developing an effective means of written communication
- to facilitate students' appreciation of Chinese as an appropriate response to a society's desire for a systematic means of written communication
- to encourage students to think critically and logically
- to allow students additional opportunity to work cooperatively in small groups

Preparation

Materials:

* Samples of ancient Chinese pictographs (FLASHCARDS 1-5)
* Samples of Chinese ideographs (FLASHCARDS 6-8)
* Samples of compound ideographs (FLASHCARDS 9-14)

* Copies of STUDENT--List #1
  (1 for every group of 4-6 students)
* Copies of STUDENT--List #2
  (1 for every group of 4-6 students)

Before class:

Study the supplementary section on "The Chinese Language." A synopsis of this information appears in the first activity of this lesson: REVIEW OF PICTOGRAPHS AND IDEOGRAPHS.

Be familiar with the examples of pictographs, ideographs, and compound ideographs to be presented to the class. These are provided on flashcards which you may cut out and glue to cardboard to preserve them.

Activities

(1) CONDUCT A REVIEW OF PICTOGRAPHS AND IDEOGRAPHS.

(A) PICTOGRAPHS:

1. Ask students if anyone can explain what a pictograph is.
2. Now present the following ancient Chinese pictographs by holding up the flashcards (1-5) for student viewing. Upon displaying each flashcard, ask students if they can determine the meaning of each ancient pictograph. (Most are quite obvious!)

#1(mouth)

#2(eye)

#3(sun)

#4(tree)

#5(cart)

3. Why do you suppose we call these PICTOGRAPHS? (You may wish to explain the meanings of the roots "picto" and "graph".

(B) IDEOGRAPHS:

4. Now ask students if they remember what an ideograph is.
5. Again using the flashcards provided (6-8), display the following ideographs to the class for viewing.

#6(one)

#7(up)

#8(root)

Ask students if anyone can guess the meaning of these ideographs. Most likely these will be more difficult for students to correctly identify. If the class is unable to guess, supply the meanings of the ideographs and explain how each derives its meaning. (See Supplementary Notes on "The Chinese Language.")

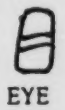
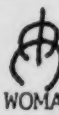
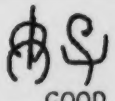
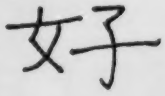
(C) COMPOUND IDEOGRAPHS:

6. Probe students to recall their own adventures in using pictographs and ideographs to convey a written message. What were the limits of such forms as they experienced them in the preliminary exercise?

7. Explain the Chinese solution to the limitations of simple pictographs and ideographs--COMPOUND IDEOGRAPHS. These are ideographs which have more than one part. They communicate things and ideas that cannot be easily expressed by a simple picture or ideograph. Be sure to stress to students the importance of the relationship between the different components of the COMPOUND IDEOGRAPH; the meaning of the compound ideograph is derived from the association between the various components.

8. Use the flashcards (9-11) to demonstrate examples of compound ideographs. Below is a summary chart of the three ideographs used to illustrate this concept.

COMPOUND IDEOGRAPHS

COMPONENT #1	COMPONENT #2	COMPOUND CHARACTER	MODERN EQUIVALENTS
ROOF	PIG	* HOUSE (pig under roof)	
HAND	 EYE	LOOK (hand shields eye)	
 WOMAN	CHILD	 GOOD (woman and child connote goodness)	

9. Return to the pictographs for SUN and TREE presented in Part (A), Step 2 (Flashcards #3 and #4). Inform students that the forms of written characters they see in these flashcards (#3 and #4) are the earliest picture-forms of the characters. Over time the method for writing these characters changed, so that they came to be written as follows:

SUN

TREE

(These later forms are presented on Flashcards #12 and #13)

10. Next, present the following compound ideograph (Flashcard #14) to the class. Ask them to consider the meaning of each component of the ideograph--SUN and TREE. Then ask them to concentrate on the relationship between the two parts. Ask if anyone can guess the meaning of the ideograph.

EAST*

*The sun is rising through the trees; the sun rises in the East, so the ideograph means EAST

11. If students are having difficulty guessing the meaning, offer suggestions by asking the following questions to point them in the right direction:

    a. Where is the sun? (in the trees)
    b. When is the sun in the trees? (sunrise, sunset)
    c. Where does the sun rise?

    (Students may just as rationally conclude that this ideograph represents sunset and thus may guess that the meaning of the ideograph is WEST!)

12. Discuss the examples of the compound ideographs presented in this introduction. Be sure to clarify the relationships between the different parts of the compound ideographs, and emphasize to students that the significance of the ideograph is revealed in the relationship between the parts. Have students bear this in mind while they engage in their own discovery work!

(2) INTRODUCE THE DISCOVERY PROJECT

Divide the class into small groups (4-6 students in each group). Give each group a list of oracle bone characters that have already been "decoded" (STUDENT--LIST #1). To assist in the process of group cooperation, you may wish to have each group select a leader and/or a recorder.

Once students are settled in their groups, explain to the class that these ancient characters they have before them were developed from characters found on Chinese oracle bones from the Shang Dynasty

(c. 1500-1100 BC), and that oracle bones were animal bones or tortoise shells carved with sayings used to help predict the future. (Students may relate this to similar practices of divination in Western culture with which they may be familiar; e.g., the SPHINX.)

Have students look at LIST #1, and explain that experienced archaeologists have already decoded--that is, figured out the meaning--of these characters. Now, the class, as junior members of an archaeology team, has just returned from a mission in China. During their digging class members discovered some additional oracle bones with ancient Chinese characters inscribed on them. However, they have never seen these characters before!

(3) DISCOVERY EXERCISE:

Give each group a copy of the newly discovered characters (STUDENT--LIST #2). Explain to the class that their task, as junior archaeologists, is to determine the meanings of these new characters using the list of characters already decoded as a tool with which to conduct their investigation of the new characters. Remind students of the concept of COMPOUND IDEOGRAPHS--ideographs whose meanings are determined by the relationship between different parts of the character. Allow students sufficient time to arrive at a meaning for each character. (Required time will vary from group to group and class to class.)

(4) REVIEW POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

When all groups have completed the task, bring the class together again and have each group share their answers as you proceed through the list. Again, the purpose of the exercise does not require that the students determine the "correct" meaning of each character. Instead, observe how students arrive at their answers: What relationships do they see between different parts of each compound ideograph? How do these relationships help them arrive at their definitions? The analytical process students employ in their decoding and the imagination they express in deciphering the new characters contribute to the value of the exercise.

(5) DISCUSS CHINESE CHARACTERS.

Have students discuss what they have learned about Chinese characters in general, and compound ideographs in particular. You may wish to include the following:

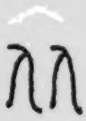
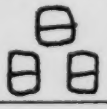
(A) How did the Chinese convey abstract ideas, such as "bright"?
(B) How did the class convey such ideas during the earlier exercise?
(C) Which characters were easier to decipher?
Which were harder?
Why do you think some were easier/harder than others?
(D) Were there any characters which seemed like they could mean two different things? (e.g., EAST)
(E) Can students identify which of the characters are pictographs? And which characters are ideographs?

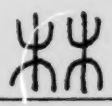
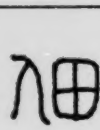
Notes

(A) Depending on the age and reading level of your students, you may want to introduce new vocabulary items before beginning the lesson. Here are some of the more difficult words incorporated into the explanations and exercises.

a. investigate
b. oracle bones
c. divination
d. decipher
e. artifacts
f. component
g. site
h. archaeologist/ archaeology

(B) In reviewing the meanings of the new characters with the class, you will undoubtedly witness an array of original solutions! Below are the meanings of each character, along with descriptions of their derivation. Also included is a list of "answers" frequently given by students.

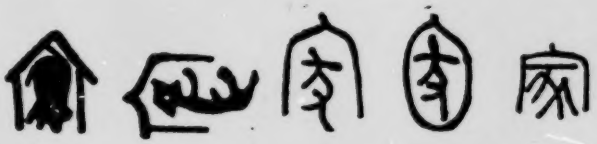
#	character	meaning	derivation & frequent answers
1		prisoner	a man contained in a circle; (frequent answers: one person; lonely)
2		follow/ agree	2 people facing the same direction; one following another; (frequent answers: couple, marry; friends; alike)
3		branch	pictograph of a tree, with a "pointer" (see SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES) indicating the tip of a branch; (frequent answers: treetop, high)
4		bright	3 suns--each contributing its brightness
5		rest	a man leaning against a tree to rest; (frequent answers: plant, chop)
6	*	eyebrow	pictograph of the eye () and hair above it (). (frequent answers: look up; eyelid)

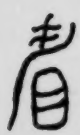
#	character	meaning	derivation & frequent answers
7		forest	2 trees--connoting many; (frequent answers: wood, orchard)
8		garage*/ storehouse	a roof with a cart underneath; (*originally a storage place for chariots)
9		three	three lines--each representing one (frequent answers: sometimes students will concentrate their answers on the difference in length of the three lines)
10		farmer	a man and a field; (frequent answers: plant, sow, harvest)

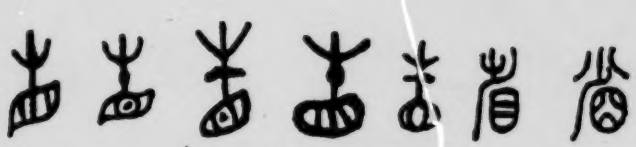
SPECIAL NOTE

* For many of the ideographs and compound ideographs presented in this discovery project, variations existed in ancient times. Though various forms did occur, it is important to realize that each variant reflected the same idea. Variants of two characters presented in this discovery project are given below, simply to indicate the range of writing styles existing in ancient times.

Form presented in this unit: Variations:







These illustrations of ancient variants are excerpted from The Etymologies of 3000 Chinese Characters in Common Usage by Chang Hsuan. Copyright of Hong Kong University Press 1968. (p.230 & p. 558)

Discussion Topics

#1: In order to give students perspective on the amount of time involved in the development of the Chinese written language from the original pictographs found on the oracle bones of the Shang Dynasty to the present, it would be helpful to have students construct a time-line. On the time-line students can place events from Chinese history as well as events in the history of the Western hemisphere with which they are familiar. This will help orient students and allow them to make comparisons in the development of various civilizations.

#2: Students may further explore the work of archaeologists and the science of archaeology. There are many excellent books and illustrations of recent archaeological discoveries in the People's Republic of China available for your use. Students may wish to view other artifacts discovered in ancient tombs and sites of ancient Chinese cities. They can discuss what archaeologists can learn from these ancient artifacts, and how they go about reconstructing the lifestyles of people in ancient cultures. A visit from someone who has conducted archaeological fieldwork would be appropriate.

#3: Students can begin to investigate the development of Chinese characters from rounded, pictographic forms to their more conventional modern forms, in an effort to prepare themselves for the next discovery exercise. Show students FLASHCARDS #3 and #12 (SUN) and ask what differences they see between the two. Then show FLASHCARDS #4 and #13 (TREE), again asking students to observe the differences between the two forms. Ask which forms look more like the objects they represent. See if students can hypothesize why the forms changed to the later, straight-edged, more conventional forms.

#4: Students now "know" how to write 1 and 3 in Chinese. Ask if anyone can guess how the Chinese write 2. (二) Ask students how they think the Chinese might write 6, 11, or 25, etc. Why wouldn't the Chinese use one line per one object beyond the number three? What problems would arise from writing 11 or 25 in this manner?

#5: After investigating the concept of COMPOUND IDEOGRAPHS, you may wish to explore COMPOUND WORDS in English with the class. Have the class list compound words that they recognize. Then proceed through the list, analyzing the meanings of each part of the word, and the relationship between the two parts.

#6: Ask students for examples of ideographs and compound ideographs they see everyday. Such examples might include Arabic numerals, Roman numerals; road signs, etc. Put the following examples on the board, and see if the students can "read" the ideographs.

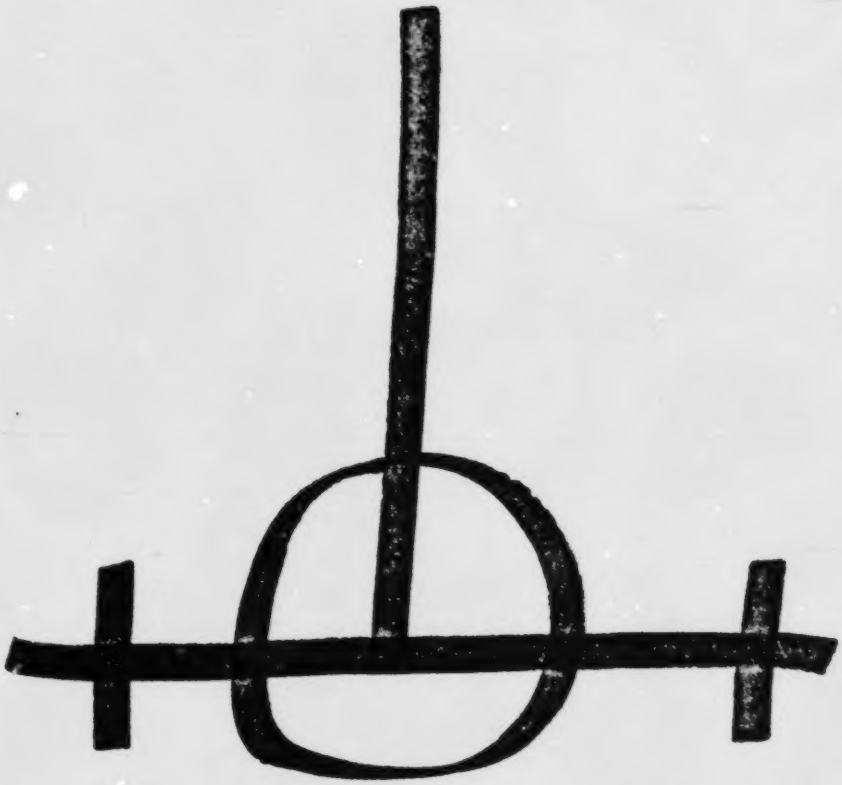
1

2

3

4

5

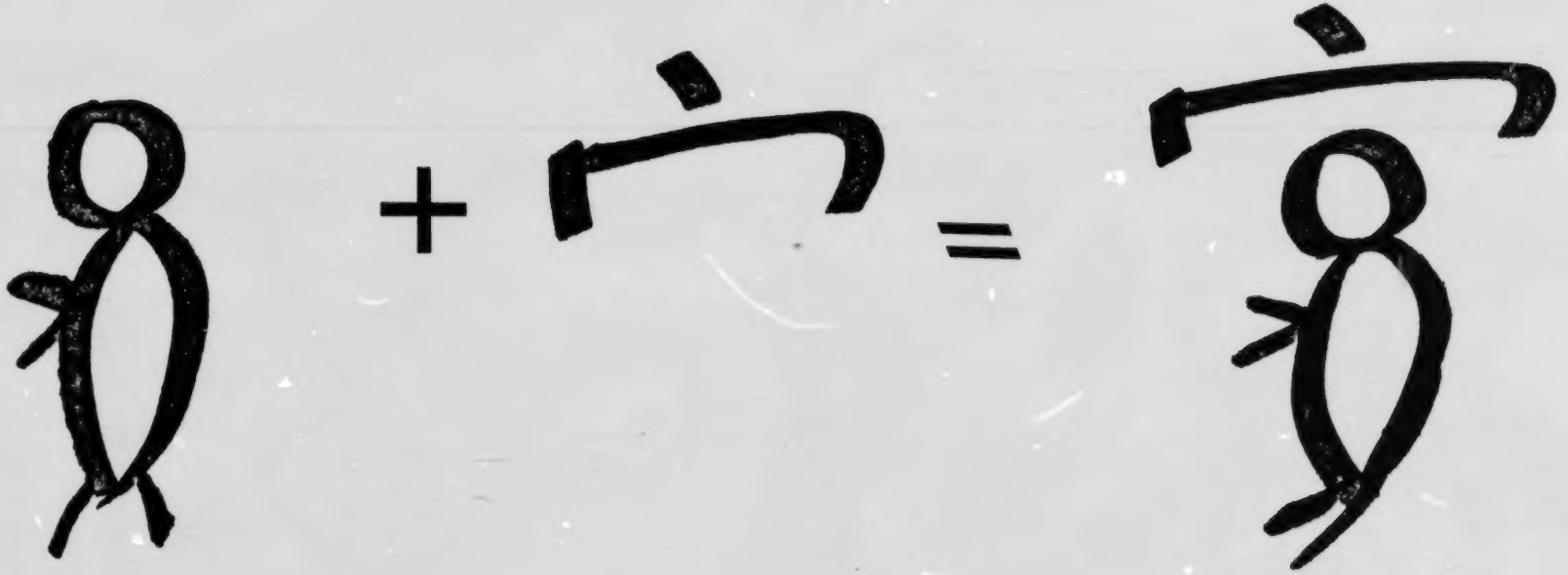


6

7

8

9



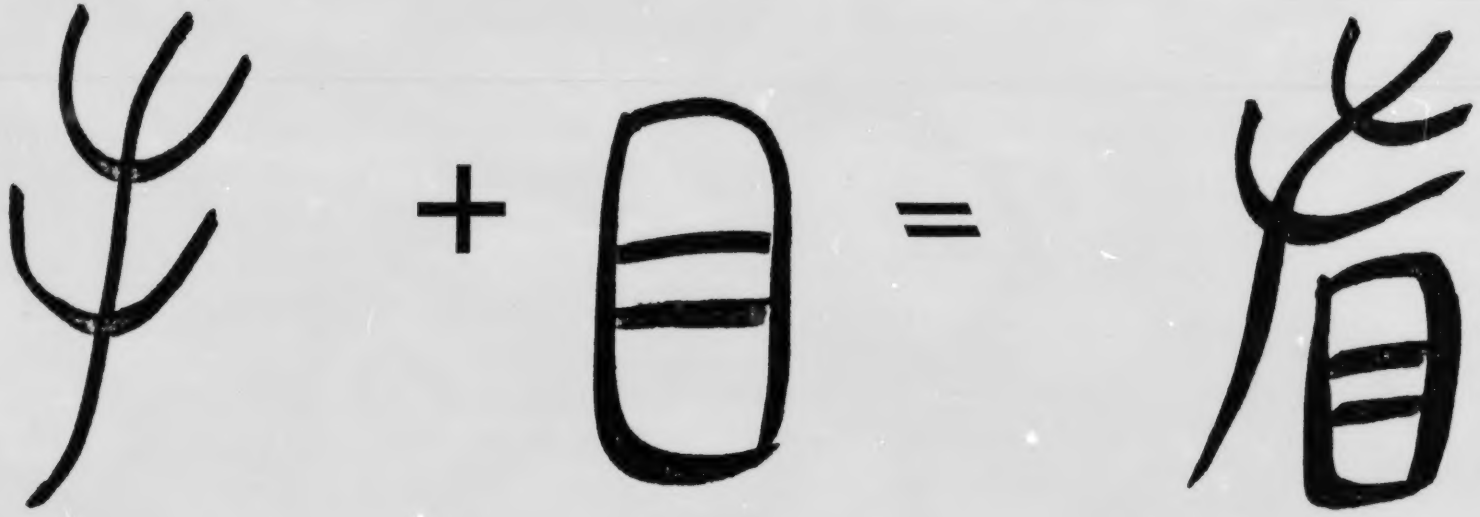
pig roof house/ family

21

26

27

10



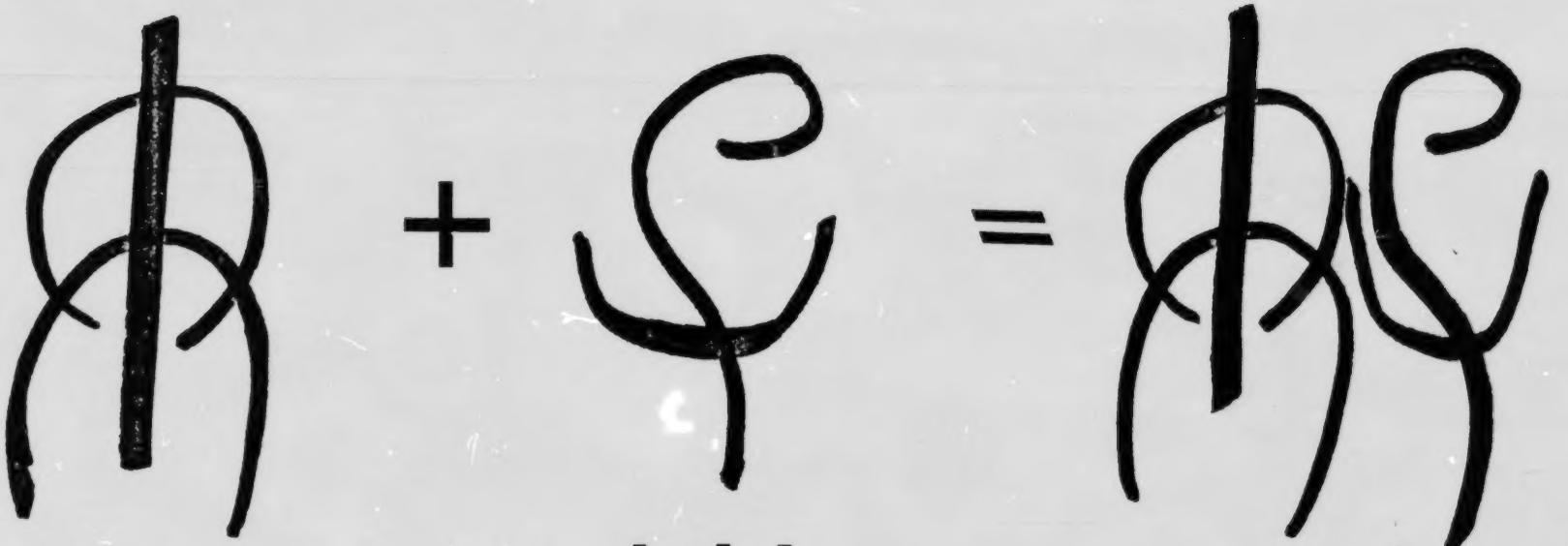
hand eye to look

22

28

29

11



woman child good

23

12

13

14

flashcards

1. MOUTH (Ancient)
2. EYE (")
3. SUN (")
4. TREE (")
5. CART (")
6. ONE (Modern)
7. UP/ABOVE (Modern)
8. ROOT (Modern)
9. HOUSE (Ancient)
10. TO LOOK (Ancient)
11. GOOD (Ancient)
12. SUN (Modern)
13. TREE (Modern)
14. EAST (Modern)

STUDENT

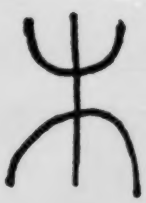
LIST #1

DECODED CHARACTERS

In recent years archaeologists have been working in China--digging up artifacts used by ancient societies, and investigating them to see what they can learn about how people lived long, long ago. Imagine that you are junior members of an archaeology team. On past trips to China, the senior members of your team discovered some tablets and animal bones with writing on them. They "decoded" this writing, and found out that the characters below mean:

SUN

TREE



PERSON

ROOF

FIELD

CART

EYE

ONE

34

STUDENT

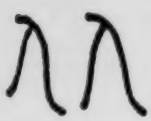
LIST #2

NEWLY DISCOVERED CHARACTERS

While you were digging in North China, you came across more oracle bones with the following characters on them. However, you have never seen these characters before! You must use your knowledge of the characters on LIST #1 and work as a group to "decipher"--figure out the meaning of--these new characters. Don't forget that the ancient Chinese used COMPOUND IDEOGRAPHS. Some characters will have more than one part and you must pay attention to how the parts fit together. GOOD LUCK!

(1)

(2)

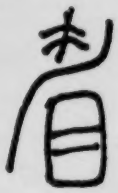


(3)

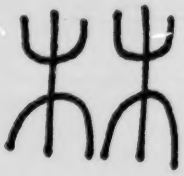
(4)

(5)

(6)

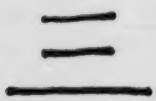


(7)

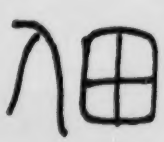


(8)

(9)



(10)

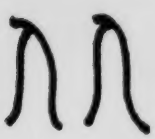


ANSWER KEY

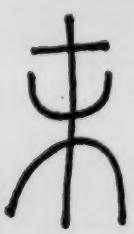
DISCOVERY PROJECT #1

(1) PRISONER

(2) FOLLOW/AGREE



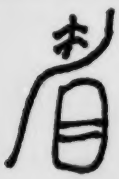
(3) BRANCH



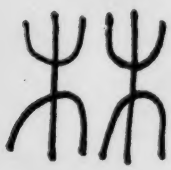
(4) BRIGHT

(5) REST

(6) EYEBROW

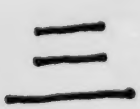


(7) FOREST

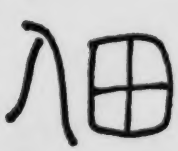


(8) GARAGE/STOREHOUSE

(9) THREE



(10) FARMER



DISCOVERY PROJECT #2

Background

Language is in a constant state of change. As a language changes, the medium used to record it--writing--must change too. The purpose of this exercise is to illustrate some of the changes that have occurred in Chinese writing from its earliest form to the present. Students will observe the development of Chinese characters from explicit pictographs and ideographs to the more stylized and conventional forms of this century.

Students will first view pictographs and ideographs familiar to them--those encountered in the previous DISCOVERY PROJECT. They will trace the development of the six "review" characters from early forms to the present forms. Students will attempt to evaluate how and why the written forms changed in appearance. Following this, a new set of six pictographs and ideographs will be presented for students to identify. These will also be ancient forms--those which more closely resemble pictures of the objects and ideas they represent, thus making the students' task of identification less difficult.

After students learn the meaning of each "new" character, they will try to modify these in the same way the Chinese modified the characters students observed earlier. Students will attempt to simplify and standardize the writing process. In this way, they will be "predicting" the course of development for each of the six characters! Finally, students will match the ancient forms of the characters presented with the later forms used by the Chinese.

The characters used in this DISCOVERY PROJECT will help students review vocabulary encountered previously in the unit, and will introduce vocabulary items incorporated into DISCOVERY PROJECT #3.

Objectives

- to view changes that have occurred in Chinese writing
- to hypothesize why these changes have occurred
- to review characters presented in DISCOVERY PROJECT #1
- to introduce "vocabulary" for DISCOVERY PROJECT #3

Preparation

Materials: chalkboard, chalk; "DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CHARACTERS" (Chart); copies of the following (one for each student):

* IDENTIFICATION--PART A
* IDENTIFICATION--PART B } on same page; cut apart
* Matching exercise

Before Class: Review the DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CHARACTERS chart. Be familiar with the review characters (Part A) and the six new characters (Part B).

Activities

(1) Give each student a copy of IDENTIFICATION--PART A. Let students work independently to identify the six characters. (Some are in the earliest pictographic form to make them easier for students to recognize; others are in the form used in DISCOVERY PROJECT #1, and so students should be familiar with them.) Go over the answers together:

1. Sun	2. Tree	3. Person
4. Mouth	5. Field	6. Cart

(2) Next show the class the DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CHARACTERS chart. Ask students to observe the changes between the characters across each row.

A. What changes do you see between the character on the left of each row and the character on the right of each row?
B. Which characters look more like the objects they represent?
C. Which do you think would be easier to draw? Why?

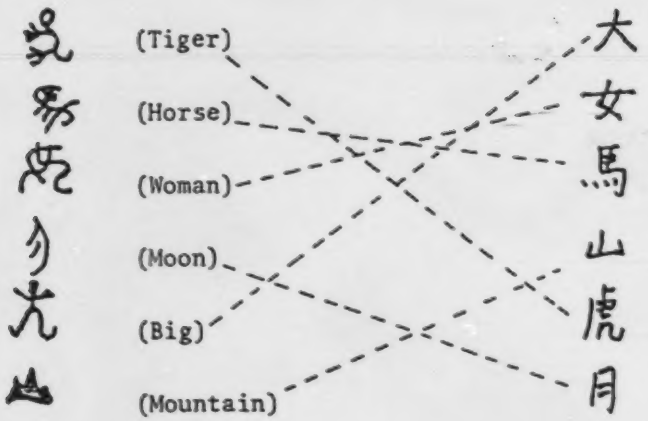
(3) Now give the student another set of six characters (IDENTIFICATION--PART B). Tell them that these are characters they have never seen before. These characters are also in ancient picture form. They are to look carefully at the characters and try to determine their meaning. Give students ample time to fill in the worksheet. Go over the answers together:

1. Moon	2. Horse	3. Tiger
4. Woman	5. Big	6. Mountain

(4) Just as the students observed how the Chinese written forms of sun, tree, person, mouth, field and cart changed over time, so they must now predict how the six characters for MOON, HORSE, TIGER, WOMAN, BIG, and MOUNTAIN changed. Remind students that they must strive to make the characters easier to reproduce without making them unrecognizable!

(5) Once students try for themselves to alter characters in an effort to make them easier to reproduce, they will have a greater appreciation of the criteria influencing the development of written forms. Now give each student a copy of the MATCHING EXERCISE. The characters on the left side are the early pictographs and ideographs the students worked with earlier. On the right side of the worksheet are the present-day forms of the six characters. Students are to draw lines from the pictograph/ideograph on the left to its current form on the right. Go over the answers together.

ANSWERS TO MATCHING EXERCISE:



(6) When students have completed and checked the matching exercise, the class as a whole should discuss the changes that have occurred in these six characters, much in the same manner as the discussion in Activity 2.

Notes

(A) If students are having difficulty identifying the six new characters in IDENTIFICATION--PART B, you may wish to help them by offering the following hints.

1. MOON: Point out the crescent shape.
   WHAT OBJECT DO YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU SEE A CRESCENT?
2. HORSE: Point out the mane along the horse's neck.
3. TIGER: Point out the sharp claws.
   WHAT ANIMAL HAS SHARP CLAWS?
4. WOMAN: This is a picture of a woman's body, legs, and arms (without a head).
5. BIG: This is a picture of a grown man stretching. Ask students how they would convey that something is very big if they were describing it to a friend. (Most likely they will stretch out their arms to demonstrate the size of the object which they are attempting to describe.)
6. MOUNTAIN: This is a cluster of three mountains with the tallest in the center.

(B) During Activity (2), students will discuss the chart entitled DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CHARACTERS. While viewing this chart, make sure that students not only observe the nature of the changes reflected in the exemplified characters, but that they also construct hypotheses concerning the causes of these changes. Students may suggest hypotheses such as: (1) The characters were modified to exclude unnecessary details in order to facilitate ease in production; (2) Characters were conventionalized or standardized, for instance curved lines became box-like, etc., in order to insure that people would all interpret the symbol in the same way; and (3) The changes in written forms of characters reflected changes in writing implements. This latter topic may even provide a good research project for ambitious students to explore. HOW WAS THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING TOOLS AND MATERIALS SIGNIFICANTLY RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CHARACTERS? For instance, have students think about the inherent differences between using a chisel and stone tablets, versus using a refined engraving instrument and bamboo, versus using a brush, ink and silk or parchment, versus using a ballpoint pen/pencil and paper, versus using a printing press, ink and newsprint! What differences in the instruments of writing might inhibit/facilitate the production of certain forms of characters (e.g., rounded, straight-edged, simple, complex, thin-lined, thick, etc.)?

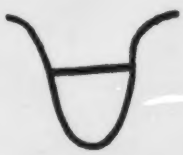
Discussion Topic

#1: This is an appropriate time for students to trace the development and changes in the written forms of the English alphabet. You may wish to secure an example of early forms of English (perhaps even Old English or Middle English script!)--or from the time of the Declaration of Independence, and have students observe the differences in writing styles between the forms of the past and those they use today.

STUDENT

IDENTIFICATION--PART A

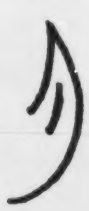
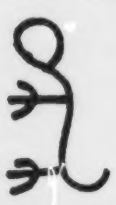
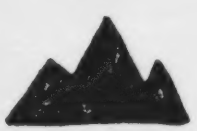
Do you know these characters?

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____
 4. _____	5. _____	6. _____

How many did you remember?

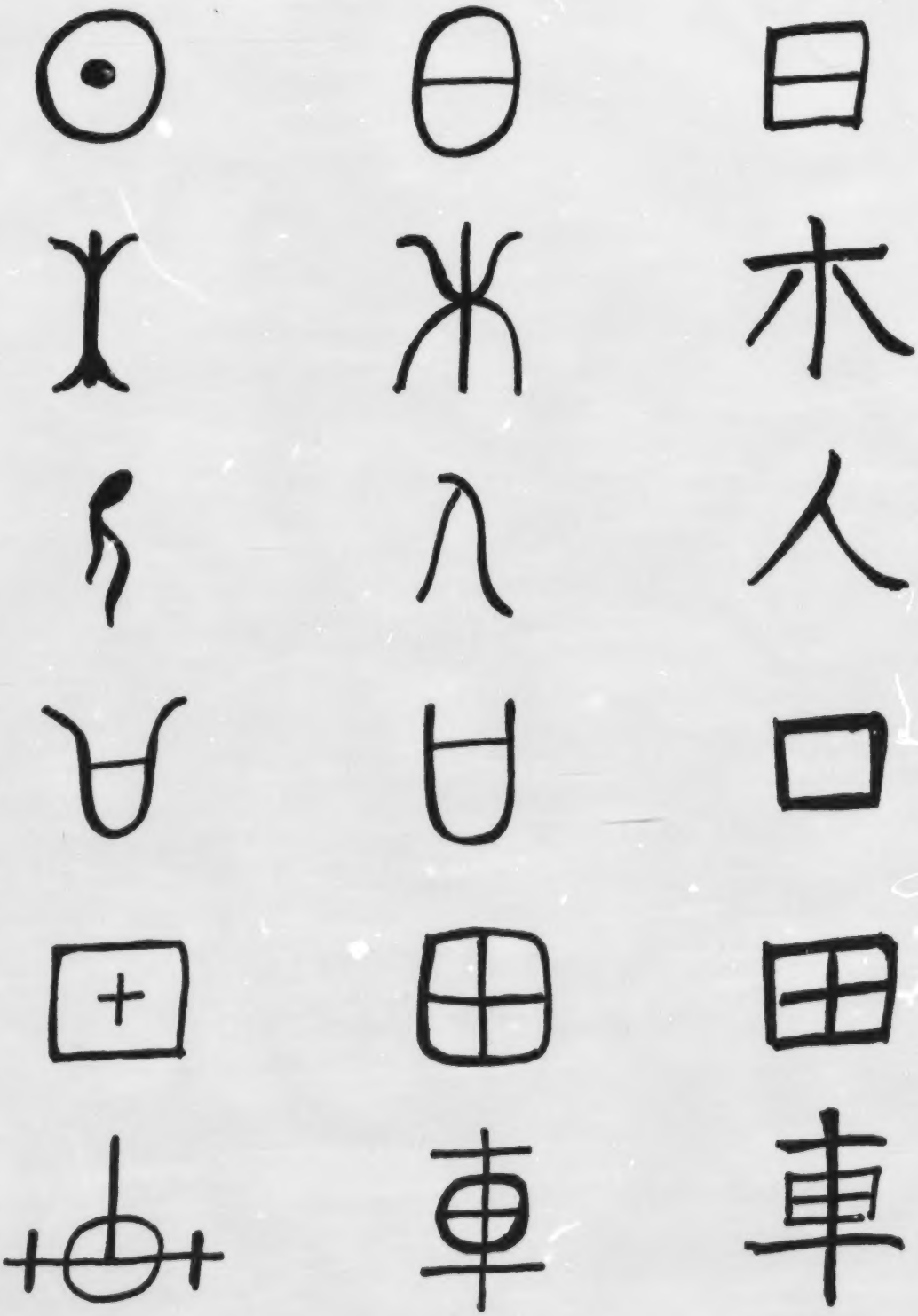
IDENTIFICATION--PART B

Can you guess what these characters mean? Look at them carefully!

 1. _____	2. _____	 3. _____
4. _____	5. _____	 6. _____

CHART

DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CHARACTERS



STUDENT

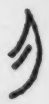
MATCHING EXERCISE

Look at the characters on the left. They are the same characters you saw in PART B. Can you match each one with its present form on the right? How has each of the characters changed?

(Tiger)

(Horse)

(Woman)

 (Moon)

(Big)

(Mountain)

大

女

馬

山

虎

月

DISCOVERY PROJECT #3

Background

Students have now experienced the trials and tribulations of developing a means of written communication; they have become familiar with the concepts of pictographs, ideographs and compound ideographs; and, they have observed the development of Chinese writing from early forms to current forms. In the previous exercises, students encountered both pictographic and ideographic forms of writing. Through their encounter students acquired new knowledge about communication systems and gained an appreciation of a writing system vastly different from the alphabetic writing they use daily.

Thus far, however, students have only come in contact with characters in isolation. Now it is time for them to observe characters set in a context. The discovery exercise consists of a story written in English with a limited number of modern characters interspersed. Students are encouraged to use the contextual clues of the story to help them decipher the meanings of the characters included. Several of the included characters were introduced to students in previous discovery exercises, and thus should be relatively familiar to students. These familiar characters will serve as an aid in students' comprehension of the story. Illustrations in the story provide additional clues to the meanings of the characters and the plot of the story in general.

Two stories are provided, depending on the reading level of your students. Elementary students will read a short story entitled THE 人 WHO COULDN'T READ 字 (The Person Who Couldn't Read Characters). This story is approximately 150 words in length and contains about 15 vocabulary items in characters, 5 of which have been presented in earlier sections. Secondary students are provided with a longer story (approximately 700 words), entitled THE 水牛 AND THE 老虎 (The Water Buffalo and the Tiger). This story includes about 15 new vocabulary items in characters, as well as approximately 10 characters encountered in previous exercises.

This DISCOVERY PROJECT is an enjoyable way for students to view pictographs and ideographs in context. Students will gain an additional dimension to their knowledge of the Chinese writing system and how it functions as a viable means of communication.

Objectives

- to provide students with an opportunity to view characters in context
- to encourage students to use the following clues to read the story appropriate to their reading level:
  - * context
  - * previous knowledge of characters
  - * illustrations
- to broaden students' understanding of how the Chinese writing system communicates ideas

Preparation

Materials: THE 人 WHO COULDN'T READ 字 (ELEMENTARY)--1 for each student
THE 水牛 AND THE 老虎 (SECONDARY)--1 for each student

Glossary--(student copies are optional)

Before class: Read whichever story is appropriate for your students, and be familiar with the vocabulary items written in Chinese characters. (Review glossary)

Activities

(1) Inform students that they are now going to read a story using modern Chinese characters. Some of the characters in the story will be those they have seen before (in previous lessons). Others will be completely new! Students should be instructed to pay close attention to what the story is about in order to figure out the meaning of each specific character or combination of characters. Warn students that sometimes two Chinese characters are the equivalent of one word in English. And, remind students to look carefully and attentively at the pictures accompanying the story.

(2) Give students a copy of the story prepared for their reading level, and allow them ample time to read the story independently. If students are having difficulty deciphering the characters or comprehending the story in general, you may wish to provide additional clues by reviewing the characters which were included in previous exercises. This will refresh students memories, and provide them with some key vocabulary items.

ELEMENTARY:

人	person	大	big
山	mountain	一	one
(老)虎	tiger	上	above

SECONDARY:

一	one	田	field	好	good
二	two	(老)虎	tiger	看	see
三	three	口	mouth	目	eyes

(3) When students have completed their reading, you may wish to ask comprehension questions much as would be asked for an ordinary reading assignment.

ELEMENTARY:

A. Who are the people in the story?
B. What animal appears in the story?
C. Where does the story take place? (What country?)
D. Where did the tiger live?
E. Why did the people who were hunters want to catch the tiger?
F. What did the hunters do to warn others about the tiger trap?
G. What happened to the village person?
H. Why did he fall into the tiger trap?

SECONDARY:

A. What animals are involved in the story?
B. Why does the farmer curse his water buffalo?
C. What does the buffalo advise the tiger to do?
D. How does the water buffalo prepare himself for the duel?
E. What is the outcome of the duel?
F. Why does the farmer respect the water buffalo now?

(4) After checking for general comprehension, see if students understand the meaning of specific characters included in the story. Ask students which characters were easiest to figure out and which were harder. Why? How did they figure out the characters?

Notes

(A) If your class is using this exercise without having done the previous DISCOVERY PROJECT exercises, start the exercise by introducing the vocabulary highlighted in Activity #2 (for whichever story you are reading in the class).

(B) Here are some explanatory comments on several of the characters included in each story:

THE 人 WHO COULDN'T READ 字

中国 CHINA (Middle Kingdom)
Many centuries ago, the Chinese believed that China was situated in the middle of the earth (which was believed to be flat), with the rest of the world surrounding her. The Chinese word for their country reflected this world view. The Chinese referred to China as the MIDDLE KINGDOM. The character for middle (中) is an ideograph of an arrow piercing a target in the center. The second ideograph (国) means "country."

老虎 Students previously encountered the single character for tiger. In modern Chinese the two-character combination 老虎 is used to mean tiger. (老 literally means "old.")

小心 Though the literal meaning of the characters are "small" and "heart" respectively, the combination together means CAREFUL. This combination will undoubtedly be difficult for students to guess. If they need a hint, you might ask them what they would say to a person who is in danger of stepping into a trap.

人 This character can mean either person or persons. Ask students how they know when it referred to one person (the village 人) or more than one person (the 人 who were hunters). See if students picked up the plural marker in English to determine whether or not the character referred to a single person or to many people.

THE 水牛 AND THE 老虎

Below are listed two-character combinations appearing in the story. Most are self-explanatory, but are listed here to bring them to your attention.

農夫	farmer	This combination literally means "one engaged in agriculture;" The character 農 signifies agriculture, and the character 夫 refers to a person engaged in a service.
水牛	water buffalo	Literally this combination means "water cow."
泥土	clay	This combination for "clay" literally means mud 泥 and earth 土.
半天	half-day	While this combination literally means half-day (半 --half and 天--day), it generally refers to "a long time."
天天	everyday	天 by itself means "day." Replication of the character conveys the meaning of "everyday."
老虎	tiger	See note on previous page under THE 人 WHO COULDN'T READ 字 .
磨尖	sharpen	Literally, 磨 means "to grind" and 尖 means "sharp." Together they mean to grind until sharp--or to sharpen!
身体	body	The first character in this combination, 身, means "body"; the character 体 means "body," "trunk" or "substance." They are commonly used together to connote "body."

Commentary is provided for the individual characters below to provide necessary grammatical information and to offer an excellent example of a compound ideograph (Refer to the discussion/explanation on Page 10).

二	two	In Chinese, the character 二 is used as a counter, as in counting from one to ten (一, 二, 三, . . .) However, in certain circumstances the special character 兩 is used to mean two--usually two of something, as in 兩 days, 兩 dollars, etc. In the story the phrase "二 curved 角" (two curved horns) is substituted for "兩 curved 角," (which would be grammatically correct) merely because students are familiar with the character .
犁	plow	The character 犁 refers either to the noun "plow," or to the verb "to plow." The compound character consists of the character 利 (on top), meaning "benefit," "gain," or "advantage," and the character 牛 (on bottom), meaning "cow." Have students analyze the relationship between the components.

THE 人 WHO COULDN'T READ 字

In ancient 中国 on a 山 there lived a fierce 老虎 which hurt 人 and animals. 一天 some 人 who were hunters decided to catch this 老虎. They made a 老虎阱 in the ground. On the 牆 near the 老虎阱 the 人 who were hunters wrote in 大字 :

"ALL 人 WHO 走 HERE,
PLEASE BE 小心.
THERE IS A 老虎阱 UNDER THIS 大 SIGN!"

While the 人 who were hunters were waiting for the 老虎, a village 人 who couldn't read 字 came 走 by 唱 a song. Suddenly, he fell into the 中 of the 老虎阱. He called in a 大 voice for 人

to help him. Another 人 heard and pulled him 上 from the 老虎阱. Then, the 人 explained the meaning of the 字 which the 人 who were hunters had written on the 牆.

The village 人 who couldn't read 字 sighed and said, "If I could read 字, then I wouldn't have fallen 下 into the 中 of the 老虎阱!"

Adapted from a story prepared by Caryn White for the University of Arizona East Asia Study Center. Used by permission.

GLOSSARY

THE 人 WHO COULDN'T READ 字

person, people, man, men 人

word, words (Chinese characters) 字

middle 中

country, kingdom 国

China (Middle Kingdom) 中国

mountain 山

tiger 老虎

day 天

trap 阱

wall 牆

big 大

walk, walked, walking 走

small 小

heart 心

be careful 小心

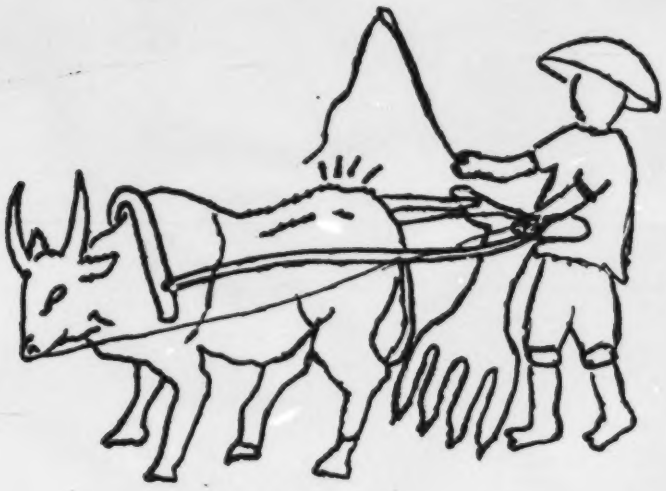
sing, sang, singing 唱

down 下

up 上

THE 水牛 AND THE 老虎

A 農夫 went to the rice田 taking his 水牛 along to 犁 . The 水牛 sank into the 泥 and after a 半天 of work, only a small corner was done. Meanwhile, the 農夫罵* and whipped the animal for not being able to pull the 犁 faster.



"You stupid creature, slow and creeping! You lift your feet only after a lengthy struggle! Haven't you seen a 老虎 ? How 快 he runs! How 强 he is! You should learn from the 老虎 ."

---

* CAREFUL! 農夫 is one word; 罵 is another!

The 水牛 could hardly stand up from the continuous whipping, and no longer able to bear the 罵 asked impatiently, "What ability does the 老虎 have? I'm more 强."

The 農夫 paid no attention to the foolish remarks of the 水牛 but just kept on flogging and 罵 the beast.

"You belittle me," the 水牛 said. "Take me to see the 老虎 tomorrow. I'll challenge him and let you 看 with your own 目 who is more 强.

The next morning, the 農夫 took his 水牛 to the 老虎. The 强 animal caught the scent of the 水牛 and leapt from his lair ready to pounce on his prey. But the 水牛 shook his 二 curved 角 and called out, "老虎！老虎！ I haven't come to challenge you 今天, but merely to inform you that your 牙 are too dull. They won't be able to pierce my heavy skin. Grind them for 三天; I'll likewise 磨尖 my 角. Then we'll fight a duel."

"Readily!" the 老虎 snarled and disappeared into his den.

The 老虎 ground his 牙 for 三天 and nights until they were razor 尖. The 水牛 also ground his 角, but only for 一天. The remaining 二天 were spent rolling his 身体 in 泥 and then straw. He repeated the process until his whole 身体 was covered with a heavy layer of 泥土, black and shiny. Nobody could ever detect the coating of straw.

On the fourth 天, the 老虎 and the 水牛 met at the appointed spot. The 老虎 saw the 水牛's 身体 covered with 泥土 and asked, "Why do you cover yourself with 泥土?"

"To withstand the heat of summer," the 水牛 replied. "I roll around the riverbank a few times 天天. That's my habit. Everybody knows that."

The 老虎 eyed the 水牛 and thought, "Nothing is wrong with him except that he looks fatter than ever." Then he laughed happily, "HO! HO! HO! Very 好. Your flesh looks quite tender. What a tasty meal I'll have!"

"老虎！老虎！ You may be able to threaten a pig or lamb, but not me. You won't be able to harm me or touch a single hair on my 身体."

"My 牙 were dull 三天 ago, but even then I'd have dared to eat you," the 老虎 replied. " 今天 my 牙 are 尖. Do you really think I can't bite you to death?"

"Very 好," the 水牛 said mockingly. "Let's 看. I'll lie down and let you be the first to bite me 三 times. If you fail, I'll give you 三 butts with my 角."

Why would the 老虎 ever disagree to that? With a dreadful snarl, the 强老虎 pounced on the 水牛, and with 口 wide open, sank his 尖牙 into the 水牛's 身体. 一 bite, 二, 三! WAS HE DEAD?

Not on your life! Only the cakes of 泥 filled with straw had fallen apart. As soon as the 老虎 had finished his 三 bites, the 水牛 got up,

lowered his head, and quick as a flash, thrust his curved 角 三 times into the 老虎's 身体.

All this time, the 農夫 was watching very closely, and observed how wise and brave the 水牛 really was. "Well, that's over," he sighed with relief.

The 農夫 had been deeply moved, and from that 天 on he cherished his 水牛. He neither 罵 nor beat his 水牛 anymore. Up to now, although the 水牛 is not very 快 at pulling a 車 or 犁 a 田, everyone respects his patience and ability.

Adapted from the story "The Buffalo and the Tiger" (A Han Folktale), in Chinese Folktales, Louise and Yuan Hsi Kuo (Eds.), (Millbrae, California: Celestial Arts, 1976), pp. 67-69.

GLOSSARY

THE 水牛 AND THE 老虎

農夫	farmer
田	field
水	water
牛	cow
水牛	water buffalo
犁	plow
泥	mud
土	earth
泥土	clay
半	half
天	day
今天	today
天天	everyday
罵	curse
老虎	tiger
口	mouth
快	fast
强	strong
看	look
目	eye(s)
一	one
二	two
三	three
角	horn(s)
牙	tooth (teeth)
磨	grind
尖	sharp
磨尖	to sharpen
身体	body
好	good

DIALECT EXERCISE

Background

In China there are many different dialects. Dialects usually refer to "regional forms of a language." However, many of the regional variants which are commonly referred to as "dialects" of the Chinese language are more different from one another than French is from Spanish or Norwegian is from Swedish! Below are some figures for different "dialect groups" in China:

DIALECT GROUP	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS (APPROX.)
• Northern (Includes Mandarin)	387,000,000
• Jiangsu-Zhejiang	46,000,000
• Hunan	26,000,000
• Jiangsi	13,000,000
• Hakka	20,000,000
• Northern Min	7,000,000
• Southern Min	15,000,000
• Cantonese	27,000,000

One thing that makes the Chinese dialect situation unique--that is different from the situation confronting speakers of French and Spanish or Norwegian and Swedish--concerns the fact that all speakers who are literate share a common written language. Thus, while oral forms vary greatly, written symbols can be used to communicate effectively between speakers of different dialects.

In this exercise, students will investigate the difficulties presented by dialect variations. The students' experiences will help accentuate the usefulness of a common written language when dialects exist. Thus primed, students will be ready to explore the desirability of anti-illiteracy campaigns and language reform movements.

Objectives

- to expose students to the obstacles to communication created by the presence of dialects
- to make students aware of the usefulness of a common writing system available to speakers of all dialect forms
- to prepare students for an investigation into the reasons for and approaches to "language reform"

Preparation

Materials: chalkboard, chalk; DIALECT EXERCISE--STUDENT handout (1 copy for each group of 4-6 students)

Before class: Review the supplement The Chinese Language appended to the back of the unit. Pay special attention to the final section "Characteristics of Spoken Chinese" in which tones and tone marks are presented.

Activities

(1) Divide students into small groups (4-6 students in each). Give each group a copy of the DIALECT EXERCISE. Instruct the groups to make up an ORIGINAL pronunciation for each symbol given. Encourage students' originality.

(2) After students have created a pronunciation for each symbol, have each group create a sentence using some of the given symbols. At the bottom of the worksheet have the group write their sentence using the symbols.

(3) Have each group present their sentence orally to the class, using the pronunciations derived by the group. Obviously only those students who are members of the group presenting the sentence will understand the sentence when orally spoken. A member of the group should then write the symbols for the sentence on the chalkboard. The groups' common knowledge of the meanings of the given symbols will then allow all members of the class to comprehend the meaning of the sentence! Continue this process until all groups have presented their sentences.

(4) Reiterate to the class that due to the vast number of dialects in China as well as to the distance between the areas in which various dialects are spoken, many Chinese people cannot communicate orally with one another. For instance, speakers of Mandarin (a dialect from North China) and Cantonese (a dialect from South China) would pronounce the items below as:

Meaning	MANDARIN	CANTONESE
I/me	wǒ	ŋ́
cup	bèi	buōy
rice	fàn	fǎn
walk	zǒu	zhǎo
look	kàn	hǎwn
person	rén	yən

The following sentence means "TODAY THE WEATHER IS GOOD."

Characters: 今天好天氣

Mandarin: Jīntiān hǎo tiānqì.

Cantonese: Gom teen ho teen hay.

(5) Encourage students to discuss the implications of such language variance. Be sure to explain that even though a person in North China (Mandarin dialect) and a person in South China (Cantonese Dialect) would pronounce the word for rice or cup differently, if both people were able to read and write, they could use the written symbol to communicate with one another.

Notes

(A) Students often try to use other languages they know (e.g., Spanish, French, pig-Latin, or some "code" language) to form their pronunciations for the symbols presented. In order to ensure that students understand the notion of ORIGINAL pronunciations, it may be necessary or advisable to produce some sample pronunciations for the first few symbols.

Discussion Topic

#1: People often overlook the fact that dialects in the United States vary quite widely from region to region. This would be an appropriate time to discuss dialect variation in the U.S. Some suggestions include making a tape of various people from different regions of the country. Be sure to have each person read or recite the same material, including key words that mark particular pronunciations. Another suggestion would be to conduct a lexical survey. These are available in various books treating dialectology in the United States. Have students choose from a variety of vocabulary words the one they use most often. Sample items from such a survey might include whether students use the word (a) handbag; (b) purse; (c) pocketbook; (d) bag, for example. Students may also use a map of the United States to try to identify various dialect regions.

STUDENT

DIALECT EXERCISE

Make up an <u>original</u>* pronunciation for each symbol below:

IDEA/WORD	SYMBOL	PRONUNCIATION
Person	人	_____
White	白	_____
River	河	_____
Flower	花	_____
Eat	吃	_____
Ten	十	_____
See	看	_____
Go	去	_____
Child	子	_____
Three	三	_____
Fish	魚	_____

Now, use at least three of the words above and make up a sentence. Write the <u>pronunciation</u> of your sentence here:

_____

Write your sentence in symbols here:

_____

* This means you must "make up" the way to say the symbol. Don't use Spanish, "pig-Latin" or any other language you may know!

LANGUAGE REFORM IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Background

People are often unaware of the complexity of the language situation facing leaders in the People's Republic of China. In their efforts to unite more than 900 million people in pursuit of common goals, the Chinese policy-makers must face a host of linguistic obstacles. Dialects and significantly different languages spoken by minority ethnic groups cause a serious lack of communication. Mastering the traditional writing system requires a tremendous output of time and energy, and thus deters literacy. The non-alphabetic nature of the Chinese writing system often makes this system cumbersome for many modern purposes--e.g., telegraph, railroad signals, etc. Indeed, Chinese language reform policy must address each of these issues.

In this section, students will investigate various aspects of the language situation in modern China and review the policies implemented by Chinese leaders in response to the situation. Students will be asked to observe how the changes in language and linguistic matters initiated by Chinese leaders reflect the changing values of Chinese society. Students will attempt to evaluate the goals and directions of language reform in the People's Republic of China in relation to the overall goals and directions of Chinese society. Language reform in the PRC will serve as an excellent example of planned language change; it will demonstrate how officials design an appropriate policy aimed at forging a viable means of communication to serve the needs of a society in transformation.

The Roles of Dialects and Minority Languages

Before determining to what extent "dialects" and "minority languages" impose a barrier to communication, it is necessary to define these terms. The usual linguistic discussion of "dialects" identifies this term as "mutually intelligible local forms of a language." However, as students experienced in the previous exercise, various dialects in China are often different enough to make them mutually unintelligible--that is, speakers of Dialect A cannot understand Dialect B and vice versa. (Fortunately, though, Chinese speakers maintain a common written language regardless of variation in pronunciation.) Though the "dialects" of Chinese may sometimes be mutually unintelligible, all speakers are one nationality and citizens of one nation striving for a set of common goals. This fact must be taken into account when considering the question of classification: Are these merely "dialects," given the fact that they are mutually unintelligible, or are they actually separate "languages" with a common writing system? According to current trends in linguistics, attitude of the speakers is an important criterion in determining classifications between languages and dialects. So, though "dialects" of Chinese may differ greatly from one another--sometimes differing enough to impede understanding between speakers, the speakers of various dialects identify themselves as Chinese and thus their regional speaking forms are considered variants of one language.* Nationalism indeed plays a crucial role in developing and maintaining the image of a common language.

*A reverse situation occurs in Scandanavia. Norwegian and Swedish are similar enough to be mutually intelligible, however, each is considered a separate national language in its own right: No one considers Norwegian and Swedish to be two dialects of one language!

In addition to the diversity created by the presence of regional forms of the Chinese language, the situation is further complicated by the presence of national minorities in China--many of whom have their own spoken language and writing system. There are 55 nationalities in the People's Republic of China--the majority Han nationality and 54 minority nationalities. The languages spoken by the minority nationalities include members of several different language families: Sino-Tibetan, Austroasiatic, Zhuang-Tai, (Southern and Southwestern China); Altaic language family (Northern and Northwestern China); and Indo-European language family (Tajik and Russian languages). Some of the major languages from these families which are spoken in China include: Tibetan, Korean, Mongolian, Uighur, and Kazakh. The tremendous variety of languages and cultures present in China contribute to the need for comprehensive language planning.

Exactly how does the existence of diverse dialects and languages affect the communication process in China (or any other country)? As demonstrated to students previously, regional forms of language can seriously impair understanding; for those Chinese speakers who are literate, the communication obstacle can be surmounted by the use of characters--a common system of written symbols. But, there are also other languages present in China, and the speakers of these languages traditionally maintained their own culture. All of these speakers--speakers of all dialects of Han Chinese and speakers of all minority languages--need to communicate with others in their society. The central government needs an avenue of communication with all people in the nation. National minorities must be effectively integrated into Chinese political and cultural life. For all of these reasons, a common spoken language is crucial.

The question arises, which language is to be chosen as the "standard" language? How does the leadership justify picking one language over another? Chinese leaders picked the Mandarin dialect (spoken originally in Northern China) with Beijing* pronunciation as the key. This choice was made on the basis of the number of original speakers before language reform efforts were initiated, not on the fact that Beijing had been one of the high cultural centers of Chinese history and culture. Having chosen which language was to serve as the common spoken language (Putonghua), how was "popularization" to be accomplished? Who was to be taught Putonghua? Would other dialects (and languages) be tolerated as well? Was it beneficial to create a bi-dialectal/bi-lingual society, or was it better to plan for a transitional period, with the ultimate goal being a monolingual society? What was to be the future of dialects and minority languages? Were they to be totally eradicated? Were the cultures closely tied to minority languages also to be eliminated eventually?

Chou En-lai proclaimed that dialects would not be eliminated. Putonghua would be popularized as a common spoken language, but dialects would be tolerated alongside the common language. The key areas for emphasis would be schoolchildren and teachers; in this way, a gradual transition from the home dialect to the national dialect would occur. Also, special attention would be given to minority areas, as language policy concerning national minorities is closely tied to political considerations affecting the acculturation of the minority poeples into the mainstream of Chinese life. (These efforts at "popularizing" Putonghua began as early as 1955, and have been maintained--to varying degrees--to the present time.)

---

*Beijing is the PINYIN romanization system's spelling of Peking.

Anti-illiteracy and Character Simplification

Any complex, modern society attempting thorough social change benefits from a literate population. In China, the traditional writing system required enormous amounts of time and energy to be learned. Due to the structure of society and the unequal distribution of wealth and leisure time, the majority of people were not able to acquire a mastery of the written communication system. In the People's Republic of China this situation was partially remedied by the creation of a more equitable system of distribution and by the formation of an "anti-illiteracy campaign." Work teams were sent to various towns and villages to teach adults how to read and write Chinese characters. But, the traditional character system still required time and energy--time and energy that could easily be put to use on other tasks and projects. These were the compelling reasons for initiating "character simplification."

Character simplification attempted to reduce the number of characters in usage (by eliminating variants and unnecessary characters), and reducing the number of strokes in many characters--especially commonly used characters. The rationale was to make the written language more uniform, and to ease the learning process.

Character simplification was initiated both by language policy-makers, and by the masses themselves. Simplified characters had long been used by peasants and others, however, no standardization of such simplified forms took place. Thus, one form of simplified character might have appeared in the north, and another form for the same original character might have been used by a peasant in the south. The language planners thus desired to standardize the simplified characters without taking the initiative away from the masses. This was accomplished by soliciting suggestions from the people on the characters to be simplified, and the forms which simplification should take. After careful consideration, a commission of language policy-makers promulgated a list of official simplified characters which were later adopted and put into general use. In this way, the masses were involved in determining the direction of simplification, and the policy-makers were able to insure standardization of the simplification process.

Characters versus Romanization

Even with the use of simplified characters, the Chinese writing system is often unsuitable for certain needs associated with modern technology. Additionally, the majority of languages in the world are recorded with some sort of alphabetic system. Many Chinese leaders feel that the Chinese language as well should follow in the direction of the majority of languages--that is, at some later date Chinese should become alphabetic.

The concept of "romanization" or of transliterating the sound of Chinese words into Roman alphabet letters is not new. However, Chinese linguists were dissatisfied with the existing systems for transliteration, and thus set about to devise a new, more accurate system. Their efforts resulted in the PINYIN system of romanized spelling. It is based upon the Peking pronunciation of the Mandarin dialect, and attempts to maintain a close correlation between one symbol and one sound. (SEE PAGE 65) PINYIN is used to help teach the standard pronunciation of Putonghua, the common language, to speakers of other dialects and languages. Additionally, it is used for such functions as telegrams, railroad signals, etc. Finally, it is incorporated into a manual-alphabet system and a Braille system for the teaching of the deaf and blind, respectively.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of implementing PINYIN? What arguments are given for and against usage of romanization over usage of characters? This is a highly emotional and ardently debated issue. It is not difficult to imagine the technical requirements involved in implementing such a fundamental change from one writing system to another completely different system, nor is it difficult to realize the linguistic constraints operating against mastering such a change. However, attitudes and emotions represent another important side to the issue of characters versus romanization. When asked whether the Chinese writing system--which has been an integral part of Chinese culture for thousands of years--would be lost forever, officials involved in language planning replied that Chinese characters would never be lost nor forgotten; specialists would be trained in the preservation of the Chinese writing system in much the same way that Western countries training limited numbers of academicians and specialists in the Latin or ancient Greek languages! Indeed, PINYIN romanization serves important functions in the changing, modernizing Chinese society, yet imposes serious fundamental questions concerning the preservation of a part of the Chinese culture--the traditional writing system.

Language Reform Policy

Considering the above-mentioned factors, the Chinese leaders advocated a comprehensive policy in regard to language planning soon after Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party unified the country in 1949. In 1955 a major conference was held to discuss the direction of language reform and language planning. At this conference the major provisions for the language reform campaign were outlined. In summary, reform efforts were to be three-fold, including the following:

(1) PUTONGHUA (the common language) was to be "popularized." Chinese leaders chose the Mandarin dialect with Beijing pronunciation as the standard; it was to be widely taught and publicized as the "universal" medium of communication in the People's Republic of China.

(2) Chinese characters were to be simplified; the number of strokes in commonly used characters were to be reduced in an effort to ease the reproduction of such characters. Simplified forms initiated by the masses were to be standardized. The number of characters in use was to be reduced by standardizing variants and replacing unnecessary characters with common forms.

(3) A system of spelling Chinese words with Latin letters was to be devised and incorporated into language teaching/learning efforts, as well as to be used for modern technological purposes. (PINYIN--a system of romanization for transcribing Chinese into alphabet letters--is the result of this effort.)

These are the steps seen as necessary by the group of policy-makers gathered at the 1955 conference to insure that language would serve as a viable tool of communication between all members of a society striving to achieve the road to socialism and ultimately to communism. The provisions include a means for creating a common medium of oral communication, a means for combatting illiteracy, and a means for adapting to modern technological demands.

Objectives

- students will identify the need for language planning in the People's Republic of China due to the unique situation facing that country (language/dialect diversity, illiteracy, etc.)
- students will evaluate language policy in China as a reflection of national goals and priorities
- students will view language as an expression of social/cultural values, and accordingly, language change as a reflection of changing values
- students will make cross-cultural comparisons between language change in China and language change in English-speaking environments

Preparation

Materials: chalk, chalkboard

Before class: Practice writing the characters used in Activity (4)!

Activities

(1) Prompt students to recall their experience in the DIALECT EXERCISE. Additionally, provide students with information on minority languages present in China--languages which do not use character writing, and thus have no common written form. If a nation is made up of groups of people who speak many different languages and dialects, how can communication be accomplished? If leaders wish to promote one common language, how do they pick which language is to become the national language? How might speakers of a language not chosen as the standard feel about the leaders' choice? (Ask students to consider how English came to be the standard language in the United States. What political/social implications are derived from this?)

Introduce the term bilingual. If a country such as China introduces a common national language to speakers of various dialects or languages, how should this be accomplished? Should the policy-makers promote a bilingual population? Or, should the eventual goal be for all people to speak the common language only? Discuss the issue of bilingualism. (Perhaps students will want to relate the discussion to current trends toward bilingualism among certain populations in the United States.)

(2) Have students discuss the effects of illiteracy. How does the inability to read and write characters (or the alphabet in other cases) affect a person's ability to operate productively in society? (For those students who read The 人 Who Couldn't Read 字 in DISCOVERY PROJECT #3, have them recall the woes of the village person who was illiterate.) What constraints existed in traditional Chinese society that kept the majority of the people from becoming literate? (Be sure students address such issues as the complexity of the writing system, the unequal distribution of wealth that led to unequal education, the lack of leisure time for certain groups in society, etc.) Do students have any suggestions for how literacy might be promoted in China?

(3) Through their own previous experiences with pictographs and ideographs, students are well aware of the difficulties involved in writing and reproducing characters. Thus, they should be able to easily list advantages to simplifying characters. Inform students of the trend for character simplification in the People's Republic of China. Explain that the Chinese leaders have solicited the help of the masses, much as students were asked to modify characters in DISCOVERY PROJECT #2. Remind students that one of the ultimate aims of language reform in China is to spread literacy--to help as many people as possible learn to read and write. With this in mind, have students construct a grid with possible advantages and disadvantages to character simplification. Some sample entries are listed below:

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
simplification reduces the number of strokes, making characters easier to learn and reproduce, and less time-consuming	those who learned characters before simplification will have to learn again
less characters to learn--total number will be reduced	characters will no longer look like the object or idea they represent (as in ORIGINS OF COMMUNICATION EXERCISE)--too much change
the majority of the people will be involved in determining how the language will change for their own benefit	it is difficult to direct change if too many people (i.e., the masses) are contributing at once--confusion will result

(4) Put the following examples on the board: (SEE LARGE REPRINTS).

English meaning	TRADITIONAL CHARACTER	SIMPLIFIED CHARACTER	PINYIN PRONUNCIATION
(STUDY)	學	学	xué
(HORSE)	馬	马	mǎ
(DOOR)	門	门	mén
(COUNTRY)	國	国	gúo

Divide the class into three groups. Tell one group to study the traditional characters, the second group to study the simplified forms, and the third group to study the PINYIN romanization. After several minutes, erase the examples from the chalkboard and ask each group to reproduce the forms assigned to them. Compare the success of the three groups in completing their respective tasks.

Most likely, the group assigned the traditional long-form characters will experience difficulty in reproducing their characters. The group assigned the simplified characters should be fairly successful in reproducing a reasonable facimile of each character. And, the group responsible for reproducing the romanized spelling of the pronunciation will undoubtedly succeed in completing their task. Use this simple example to further discuss the rationale for language reform.

(5) Vocabulary change also results from changes in society. Changes in words and word usage may occur as a process of natural change and/or directed change. An example of vocabulary change is the change from the word "icebox" to the present term "refrigerator." This was a natural evolution: "icebox" was a literal term--it was a great box which was constantly filled with ice to preserve foods that needed to be kept cold. Slowly the object came to be known as a "refrigerator" (and related to this word are others, such as "to refrigerate," etc.). Have students analyze the components of the word re-frig-er-ator (re-meaning again; frig-cold; etc.), to see how the word "fits" the object. Thus, as new objects are created or transformed, vocabulary items must be "invented" or "developed" to express these objects. Here are some examples from Chinese. Give students the literal translation and see if they can figure out the English word for the item.

ENGLISH WORD	ROMANIZATION	LITERAL TRANSLATION
bus	gonggòng qìche	public-share steam-car
telephone	diànhùa	electric-talk
typewriter	dǎzì ji	hit-character machine

(6) Now have students view the following examples of directed vocabulary change and evaluate how such changes reflect deeper changes in values and attitudes in society. For instance, the terms chai (差) and fu (夫)* were often used in describing people's occupations. Both tend to connote inferiority or servitude. Today, labor and occupations are given positive names to demonstrate their positive position in society. On the following page are two examples of new occupational names which reflect the current values of Chinese society.

---

*For those students who read The 水牛 and the 老虎 in DISCOVERY PROJECT #3, it is necessary to explain that the one exception to this term is the usage of the word nongfu (農夫) for "peasant" or "farmer." This term is still used in the PRC and does not hold a negative connotation. (SEE PAGE 37).

postal worker	
OLD TERM: yóu chai MEANING: mail servant	NEW TERM: yóu dì yuán MEANING: mail send member
worker	
OLD TERM: kǔlì* MEANING: worker	NEW TERM: gong rén MEANING: factory worker

Have students discuss the implications of the changes in vocabulary presented above. What are the Chinese attitudes towards working people today? How does the language reflect these attitudes?

Notes

(A) The purpose of Activity (4) is not meant to frustrate students. Those students in the group whose task it is to reproduce the long-form of the characters must understand that their inability to accomplish this task is not a reflection of their own shortcomings, but a reflection of the difficulty of the written language.

(B) There is no better way for students to understand the need for language reform and the resistance to substantive language change that might occur from instituting a language policy than by using English as an example. Have students look at the following lists of English words:

cow	throw	gate	food	tough
bough	go	wait	true	fight
	toe	eight	knew	phone
	goat	lay	tune	
	lone		through	
	soul			

How many different spellings are there for each sound? When someone is learning English, how do they know when to use which spelling to represent the desired sound? Are there any remedies or solutions for such spelling difficulties?

What if someone were to propose revising the spelling rules for English so that the same sound was consistently written with the same alphabet symbol (or combination of symbols)? Examples for the above list might appear as on the following page:

---

*This term is the source of the derogatory expression "coolie" used to refer to Chinese laborers in America. The literal meaning of kuli is "bitter strength."

kow	thro	gat	food	tuf
bow	go	wat	troo	fit
	to	at	noo	fon
	got	la	toon	
	lon		throo	
	sol			

What problems are evident already? Would English speakers accept this type of spelling reform? Why or why not? Who would be most likely to accept it? Who would be opposed? What values are reflected by those who would oppose or support such reforms?

(C) In relation to Note (B), it might be interesting to use the word GHOTI (which spells "fish"0 to bring home the point of the exercise. This word was contrived by a linguist and was taken from the following English spellings:

GH	as in	enough
O	as in	women
TI	as in	nation

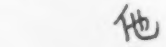
(D) If you cover the topic of "romanization" versus characters with students, you may wish to have them construct an advantages/disadvantages grid, similar to the one constructed for character simplification in Activity #3. Students will have experienced the difficulties involved in learning characters themselves. But, they should also be sensitized to the cultural attachment of the character system--both issues in the debate for and against romanization.

Discussion Topics

#1: In relation to their investigation of romanization schemes for Chinese characters and spelling in English, students might be interested in learning the INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (IPA). This alphabet attempts to assign one orthographic symbol to one sound--much the correspondence strived for in the creation of the PINYIN romanization system.

#2: Students can discuss current changes in English vocabulary resulting from changes in societal values. For instance, there are currently efforts to change such words as "mailman," mankind" and "chairman" to "postal worker," "humankind," and "chairperson," respectively. There are also trends to change third person pronoun usage from the commonly used masculine to a combination of masculine and feminine forms, or to plural forms (they, them, their).

On the other hand, the third person pronoun in Chinese was traditionally written as the following, using the "person" or "man" radical (component):



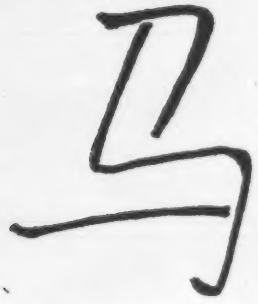
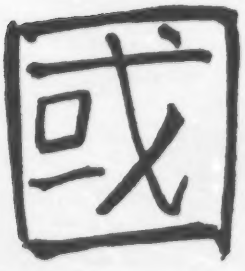
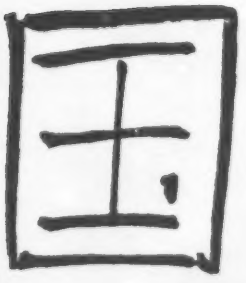
TA
(he,she,him,her)

person, man
component

Now, one can see a trend towards differentiation; when the character is used to refer specifically to females, the "female" component is used, and the character appears as:

她	女
TA (she,her)	female component

REPRINTS

	LONG-FORM	SIMPLIFIED
STUDY		
HORSE		
DOOR		
COUNTRY		

SUPPLEMENT

THE CHINESE LANGUAGE

In contrast to alphabetic languages such as English, Spanish, German, etc., Chinese does not have a "key" to its pronunciation. Though some Chinese characters have components which identify their pronunciation, in general the link between the form of the Chinese character and its pronunciation is one of convention and memorization. The written form of the character cannot be separated into phonetic units (such as CAT can be divided into /k/ + /æ/ + /t/). Thus the meaning of the character depends entirely upon its appearance and form, not upon the sound associated with it. This is similar to the Arabic numeral system, where the symbol 5 connotes a certain quantity, whether it is pronounced "five," "cinq" (French), "finnen" (German), or "chamesh" (Hebrew). Likewise, the character for 5 (五) would be pronounced "wu" in Mandarin and "ng" in Cantonese, but would symbolize the same quantity no matter how pronounced.

PICTOGRAPHS

The earliest recorded characters were pictographic, appearing first on oracle bones--divination instruments--and records of the Shang Dynasty. These early characters were comprised of a large number of recognizable drawings, e.g.:

SUN MOON EYE MOUTH

IDEOGRAPHS

Simple Ideographs:

In order to depict more abstract or complex symbolic thoughts, the development of ideographs began quite early. For instance, ancient Chinese used the ideographs 1 (一); 2 (二); and 3 (三).

Another type of ideograph utilizes a pictograph with an INDICATOR or POINTER to draw attention to a certain quality or aspect of the picture. Examples include:

UP/ABOVE:	上	(KNIFE):	刀	(TREE):	木
DOWN/BELOW:	下	KNIFE EDGE:	刃	ROOTS:	本

Compound Ideographs:

Simple ideographs were not able to convey many of the complexities of human life, so the Chinese also utilized compound ideographs--characters comprised of two or more components. The association of these components determines the meaning of the entire character. Some examples include:

TREE 木 + TREE 木 = FOREST 林

TREE 木 + SUN 日 = EAST 東

FIRE 火 + FIRE 火 = BLAZE 炎

Components of Characters

Over 90% of modern Chinese characters are composed of two components--a SIGNIFIC and a PHONETIC. The general category of meaning is derived from the SIGNIFIC while the general approximation of pronunciation is derived from the PHONETIC element. Below is a chart showing examples of characters with a SIGNIFIC and PHONETIC component. (Notice the difference of tones between the four characters using the same PHONETIC.)

CHARACTER	MEANING	SIGNIFIC	MEANING	PHONETIC
馬	horse	---	---	mǎ
媽	mother	女	woman	mā
瑪	agate	玉	jade	mǎ
螞	ant	虫	insect	mǎ
罵	scold	口	mouth	mà

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPOKEN CHINESE

Chinese is a tonal language. There are four tones in Mandarin dialect. They are: 1st--high, level; 2nd--rising; 3rd--dipping; and 4th--falling. The tone with which an utterance is said determines the meaning. When Chinese utterances are transcribed into alphabetic symbols, the tone marks are represented by the following:

1st tone: ¯ 3rd tone: ˇ

2nd tone: ´ 4th tone: ˋ

Tones are an obvious feature of Chinese, and are often the feature Westerners associate most often with the Chinese language.

GLOSSARY OF LINGUISTIC TERMS

DIALECT
A regional variety of language distinguished from other regional varieties by features of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

IDEOGRAPH
A picture or symbol used in a system of writing to represent an abstract thing or idea that is suggested by the picture or symbol. (Sometimes referred to as ideogram)

LANGUAGE REFORM
A planned policy regarding language, implemented to alter the language situation of a given society and to direct the course of language change in relation to changing conditions and values in the society.

LOGOGRAPH
A sign or symbol used to represent an entire spoken word. Examples: &, %, Mr., Mrs., Ms., etc. (Sometimes referred to as logogram)

PHONETIC
A component of a Chinese character that suggests its pronunciation.

PICTOGRAPH
A picture or symbol used in a pictorial writing system. (Sometimes referred to as pictogram)

SEMAPHORES
A system of visual signaling; a system of signaling using two flags, one in each hand.

SIGNIFIC
A component of Chinese characters that indicates the meaning or general category of meaning of the character.

PINYIN

INITIAL SOUNDS

PINYIN symbol	Approximate sound	PINYIN symbol	Approximate sound
b*	bay	q**	cheer
p	pay	x	she
m	may	zh***	judge
f	fair	ch***	church
d*	day	sh***	shirt
t	take	r	leisure
n	nose	z	adds
l	low	c	seats
g*	gate	s	say
k	kite	y	yea
h	hay	w	way
j**	jeer		

FINAL SOUNDS

PINYIN symbol	Approximate sound	PINYIN symbol	Approximate sound
a	father	iao	meow
o	saw	iu	feud
e	ugh	ian	yen
i	see	in	in
u	rude	iang	ee + young
ü	German ü	ing	sing
er	hurt	iong	u + young
ai	aisle	ua	Guam
ei	eight	uei	way
ao	now	un	went
ou	soul	uang	oo + ang
an	ah + n	ueng	oo + eng
en	under	ue	u + eh
ang	ah + ng	uan	u + ən
eng	sung	un	u + n
ong	doe + ng	uai	wife
ia	Asia	ui	we
ie	yes	uan	one

*These are de-voiced, meaning the vocal cords do not vibrate.

**These are palatal sounds, meaning the tip of the tongue touches the hard palate.

***These are retroflex sounds, meaning the tip of the tongue is slightly curled against the palate.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FOR STUDENTS

Cooper, Lee. The Chinese Language for Beginners. (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1973). 39 pp. $1.95.

Designed for all ages, this short manual describes writing, pronunciation, and vocabulary in an entertaining fashion, relating whimsical stories utilizing vocabulary given in the text itself.

Lewis, John, with illustrations by Peter Rigby. The Chinese Word for Horse (Book 1); The Chinese Man and the Chinese Woman (Book 2); and The Chinese Word for Thief (Book 3). (New York: Two Continents Publishing Group Ltd., 1977). $3.95 each.

Cleverly illustrated stories, utilizing characters' picture-like qualities. Each book has a complete glossary of characters used at the back for students' reference. Highly imaginative and entertaining.

Quong, Rose. Chinese Written Characters: Their Wit and Wisdom. (New York: Cobble Hill Press, 1968). 78pp.

A charming, fancifully written text with etymological derivations for a variety of characters. It combines tidbits of information and sayings of the philosopher Mencius in interesting asides.

Weise, Kurt. You Can Write Chinese. (New York: Viking Press, Viking Seafarer Edition, 1973). 31pp. $.95.

Useful for younger readers, this author uses bold and suggestive drawings correlating brush strokes with images to show the possible origins of simple characters.

SECONDARY STUDENTS & TEACHERS

Chang, Raymond & Chang, Margaret Scrogin. Speaking of Chinese. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978). 197pp. $10.95.

A very readable account of the Chinese language. It includes a description and cultural history of "the fascinating language that unites over 900,000,000 people." It's appeal also centers around the fact that it is written for Western language speakers with little or no knowledge of Chinese!

Chu, Yu-kuang. "The Chinese Language" in An Introduction to Chinese Civilization, (John T. Meskill, Ed.). (Lexington, MS.: D.C. Heath & Co., 1973). pp. 587-616.

A very good and brief summary of the basic characteristics of Mandarin and the relationship of linguistic structure to the thought process.

Creel, Herrlee. Chinese Writing. (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1943). 16pp. $.25.

This short, inexpensive pamphlet concentrates on the historical evolution and structural form of Chinese characters and sentences,

Creel, cont'd.

as well as the relation of Chinese writing to ancient Chinese culture. Though there are some inaccuracies due to the early publication date and the state of research on Chinese language at the time, the text is captivating nonetheless.

Gelb., I.J. A Study of Writing (Revised Edition). (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952, 1963, 1965). Chapters 1-3.

An interesting account of writing systems in which Professor Gelb investigates several relevant aspects of communication. He also offers a wealth of information on comparative writing systems, such as Sumerian, Egyptian, Hittite, Japanese, Greek, etc.

Karlgren, Bernard. The Chinese Language. (Ronald Press, 1949). 122pp.

A popularized account of the history of the Chinese language produced by one of the most distinguished specialists on Chinese philology.

Lehmann, Winfred P. (Ed.). Language and Linguistics in the People's Republic of China. (Austin, TX.: University of Texas Press, 1975). 168pp.

An account of the American Linguistics Delegation's visit to China from October 16-November 13, 1974. A fascinating and provocative narrative of their experiences is accompanied by current factual information on language reform, language teaching, and National Minority Languages, among other topics.

Want, William S.Y. "The Chinese Language" in Scientific American, February 1973.

This article offers a contemporary treatment of Chinese, emphasizing such topics as the simplified written forms and computer analysis of language.

Wieger, L. S.J. Chinese Characters: Their Origin, Etymology, History, Classification and Signification. (translated into English by L. Davrout, S.J.) (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965--first published by Catholic Mission Press, 1927). 820pp.

A book of etymological lessons with excellent illustrations of ancient characters. A concise, yet informational, historical sketch of written Chinese appears in the introductory remarks to this volume.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS SHOULD BE REFERRED TO:

Bay Area China Education Project (BAYCEP)
Room 221, Lou Henry Hoover Building
Stanford University
Stanford, California 94305

Phone: (415) 497-1115